

# INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER WORKSHEET -EVALUATION

## 2015 Social Innovation Fund Grant Competition

Legal Applicant: Applicant X Application ID: 15SI161234  
Reviewer Name: Jane Doe

Assess the extent to which the applicant addresses each of the elements of the application. Select a Rating for each element; provide comments for each Rating. All comments should address the significant strengths and weaknesses identified in your assessment that justify your Rating.

### 9. PROGRAM DESIGN

#### Proposal for Evaluation (30%)

In determining the quality please assess the following criteria:

- Applicant's capacity to ensure successful evaluation(s) of their portfolio as demonstrated by:
  - Experience in managing and supporting evaluations of past funded program models;
  - Experience influencing and supporting recipients to use evidence to improve program performance;
  - Demonstrated ability to apply evidence/evaluation results to decision-making and investment strategies;
  - Staff or contractor ability to ensure successful evaluation of their subrecipients' program models.
- The quality of the applicant's plan to assess subrecipient applicants for readiness and capacity to implement a rigorous evaluation plan that would achieve moderate or strong levels of evidence over a three to five year period.
- The adequacy of the applicant's plan to assess needs for and provide technical assistance to subrecipients as they design, implement, and monitor evaluations of their program models, including a description of the role of staff and contractors.
  - Strategy A:* Whether the applicant presented a reasonable plan for assessing the evidence level of the solutions being proposed by prospective subrecipients. or
  - Strategy B:* Whether the applicant's evaluation strategy is likely to result in funded program models achieving at least moderate levels of evidence over a three to five year grant period.
- The applicant's description of how their budget will support the cost of reasonable evaluation activities that will meet the Social Innovation Fund evaluation requirements.
  - Strategy A:* Whether the applicant made the case that there are existing program models that align with their rationale and approach with at least preliminary levels of effectiveness and the potential to achieve at least moderate levels of evidence of effectiveness during their Social Innovation Fund grant period of three to five years.
  - Strategy B:* Whether the applicant proposed solution(s) has at least a preliminary level of evidence and has the potential to increase its level of evidence under the Social Innovation Fund, and achieve at least a moderate level of evidence of effectiveness. (See definitions in *Section A.4.d*). Have they cited the research that supports their assessment?
- If the applicant is applying to more rigorously evaluate a previously funded Social Innovation Fund project: whether the evaluation strategy is likely to result in an increased level of evidence.

#### Strengths:

- The applicant proposes to support the expansion and replication of an intensive in-school intervention that engages middle-school students in a unique marching band approach to support healthy mental and physical youth development.
- The applicant provides descriptions of the evidence that they will be using to select subgrantees and these directly correlate with the definitions in the NOFA. Because the applicant is stipulating that subgrantees must come in prepared to participate in a shared "moderate" level of evidence at the macro-level/overall evaluation (i.e., evidence is quasi-experimental in design, with the use of non-randomized school-level data, matching the project "schools" with other schools not involved in/supported by the project), it can be concluded that they will have potential to reach at least moderate over the three to five year plan.
- It appears that the applicant is gathering "moderate" level of evidence from each subrecipients' evaluations through a uni-SEP approach (i.e., a single evaluation of its grantees). Specifically, they are deploying a quasi-experimental design of pretest/posttest, and incorporating shared metrics (i.e., psychometrically validated

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scales that will be used by multiple subgrantees), and expects to have a reasonable sample size. The design should result in the ability of the program to draw some causal conclusions, as it has high internal validity; however it will likely allow for limited generalizability of the results and will include a reasonable, but not large sample size. Nevertheless, the design's use of shared metrics, as well as triangulated data sources, across subgrantees, will provide a valuable dataset and in fact the cause-and-effect findings can and should inform other external audiences' work in youth development. The data and literature coming from other research will help build the evidence base for the program, demonstrating how the proposed model as implemented in other areas and populations has been effective.

- The applicant provides clear evidence of their use of evaluations in past investments, including citing almost 10 years of engaging with an external evaluation firm (EvalPros) to work with the applicant and their grantees for designing and implementing evaluations. This work included developing shared metrics, logic models, training and technical assistance provision for evaluation, and data analytics and translational support. They also communicate a history of working with accessing and leveraging community data (e.g., via the ABC Data System for the purposes of informing program design), as well as monitoring and evaluating success at the community level.
- The applicant presents clear evidence that past evaluations have, overall, driven program improvements. For example, there are a number of citations of relevant evaluation projects where evaluation findings that determined statistically significant differences between comparison groups (including pretest/posttest) led to improvements in program designs, collaborative efforts and even leader/stakeholder behavior. Another way in which they clearly indicate knowledge of how to use evidence to drive program improvements is through their thoughtful discussion of the importance of measuring short-term and interim outcomes along the path (Theory of Change) toward the longer-term outcomes of college readiness, etc. Their choice to use more direct outcomes like attendance, behavioral problems and grades, and their arguments as to why, indicate they are clear on the importance of understanding not just whether outcomes get accomplished, but the importance of analyzing for cause-and-effect in service to program improvement.

### Weaknesses:

- The applicant does not address how they will assess the needs of each subrecipient in terms of implementing the proposed evaluation strategy. They provide examples of evaluation technical assistance they have provided before, but don't explain how they might address the diversity of evaluation capacity their portfolio might demonstrate.
- In terms of monitoring, the applicant provides only "satisfactory" evidence of supporting the systems and tools that subgrantees will need to participate and engage in the evaluation efforts for the purposes of replication. They do a good job of stating that training on the ABC Data System, how to access and use the data will be provided. But, it is important to note that ABC Data System is for community-level data, not the shorter-term metrics that will also be utilized. It appears that the near-term measurement of outcomes, as well as tracking systems, etc., will be driven by the evaluation team. This does not engage subgrantees in anything more than complying with the evaluation tools and process. To really support program improvement via systems and tools, the evaluation team will need to provide technologies, dashboards, etc. that subrecipient organizations can use, independently, while also in service to the overall evaluation. There is no mention of these, explicitly, for subgrantees.
- The applicant identified EvalPros as their evaluation partner and describes their 10 year track record of working together to implement grantee evaluations. However, the applicant does not clearly delineate what role EvalPros will play in terms of evaluation implementation – if they will merely be advisors or will be contracted to design and implement the evaluation itself.

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- The applicant has budgeted \$75K per year for the intermediary-led evaluation and includes two part-time staff to operationalize the strategy. Considering the range of subgrantees they expect (8 to 14) and the level of rigor they expect to achieve (moderate using a QED design), this budget may not be entirely adequate, even for a single uni-SEP evaluation, and should be clarified. For example, they do not seem to include money for comparison site data gathering. Also, it is not clear as to whether the trainings and software licenses they will provide on the ABC Data System are included in this budget or not.
- The applicant cites three examples of past evaluations they have implemented including an implementation study, an RCT, and a QED evaluation, all of which focus on similar metrics or outcomes as the ones they are proposing for their SIF program. These evaluations all appear to have been well-implemented and show reasonably strong results. This suggests they are well-experienced in managing the type of evaluation proposed; nevertheless it continues to be a concern that even with those experiences they have not appropriately matched an evaluation budget to support their proposed evaluation design.
- The staff descriptions they provide suggest that the Director of Evaluation has sufficient experience in impact evaluations to manage an evaluation as proposed. As stated above, it is not clear, however, which roles the staff will play and which roles the EvalPros team will play. The applicant does not identify a robust plan for the evaluation including who is ultimately responsible for ensuring the feasibility of the design, preparing the subgrantees for the evaluation, and implementing the evaluation design.

   Excellent (30)

   Good (24)

**X Fair** (18)

   Inadequate(12)

**Total Score:**  18  of 30

### 10.APPLICANT FEEDBACK SUMMARY

After the panel discussion and finalizing your assessment: provide a summary of your review that captures the strengths and weaknesses of the application that had the greatest impact on your assessment. This summary, which will be provided to the applicant in the Feedback Summary Report and may be posted on CNCS' website, must be supported by your ratings and comments in the previous section.

#### STRENGTHS:

Overall the applicant proposes a strong evaluation plan that will meet the SIF requirements of at least moderate levels of evidence. They clearly outline the level of evidence that subgrantees will be evaluated for during selection, describe a single QED evaluation design which meets the moderate definition, and describe elements of the design that they have in place (i.e. data collection systems, sampling design, etc.) that suggest it will be successful. The applicant also describes a strong partnership with EvalPros with which they have 10 years of evaluation experience and have successfully implemented several evaluation designs in the past.

#### WEAKNESSES:

However, the applicant does not adequately describe how they will assess subrecipient's evaluation needs in terms of technical assistance and leaves out several important details in terms of how subgrantees will be monitored as the evaluation goes forward. They also propose a budget that seems inadequate to meet the evaluation requirement and leaves out key elements like comparison site data gathering or software

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investments. It is also not clear how they will engage with their partners, EvalPro, and how they will utilize their own staff evaluation team.